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ABSTRACT

A sequential series of four fifteen minute classroom television programs provide a drama whereby students can identify with a candidate's problems of getting elected to political office. Major purposes of the overall program are: 1) to make students aware of electoral processes in a democracy; 2) to emphasize the importance of each individual's participation and responsibility in election practices for office in local, state and federal government; 3) to stimulate student thinking and discussions about actual political problems; 4) to foster further search for information; 5) to transfer involvement practices learned in class to the community. The method used concludes each program with a dilemma demanding of the players a decision involving personal ethics vs. a politically expedient solution. A problem to solve and a list of questions are provided for the class to discuss in their attempt to arrive at a solution. Suggestions for class projects are included that require the student to research electoral background and current information. A list of recommended readings is provided. (SJM)

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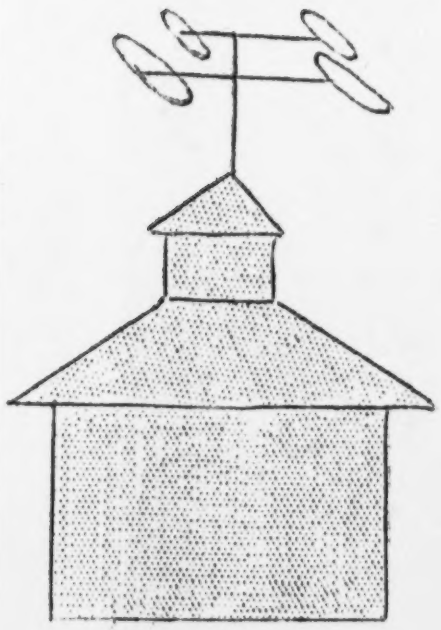

THE 21 INCH GLASSROOM

PRACTICAL POLITICS

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THE 21 INCH CLASSROOM

PRACTICAL POLITICS

Senior High School

Presented by THE 21 INCH CLASSROOM

With the Guidance of THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE 21 INCH CLASSROOM

Financed with FUNDS FROM THE MEMBER SCHOOL SYSTEMS OF THE 21 INCH CLASSROOM

Produced by WGBH-TV, CHANNEL 2, BOSTON

Authorized by THE MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION

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30 Franklin Street
Boston, Mass. 02110

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PRACTICAL POLITICS

Cast of Characters

Bill Archer.....Paul Zakrzewski
Susan, his wife.....Annette Miller
Paul Archer, his brother.....Lou Lehman
Fred Hale, town committee chairman.....Jack Sheridan
Ellie Carver, the vice-chairman.....Jacqueline Herbert
Sam Frazer.....Oliver Wyman
Hal Walker.....Elmer Stimets
Roy Matson, the precinct leader.....Mike Candelmo
Willy.....Leslie Hurley
Willy's father.....Chester Jones
Waiter.....Donald Josephs

TV Teacher.....Dr. Franklin Patterson
Lincoln Filene Center for Citizenship
and Public Affairs, Tufts University

Dramatizations by.....Albert R. Gurney, Jr.
Teachers' Guide by.....Oliver C. Holmes
Coordinator.....Wyman Holmes
Lincoln Filene Center for Citizenship
and Public Affairs, Tufts University

Practical Politics is presented by THE 21 INCH CLASSROOM in cooperation with the Lincoln Filene Center for Citizenship and Public Affairs, Tufts University.

These programs are entirely fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons is purely coincidental.

"PRACTICAL POLITICS"

A series of four dramatic television programs

for

Senior High School Students

PURPOSE

The series of four dramatic television programs entitled "Practical Politics" is designed to make students aware of our political process and to show them ways in which they can participate in this process in their own communities - now and later. The aim is to stimulate thinking and to spark discussion rather than to give pat answers or to pile up facts.

The area of politics treated in the series, as distinguished from government, lies in the election of our governmental officials. It is concerned with fundamental, down-to-earth details in which the individual is the key to success or failure. It concerns party organization, precinct work, campaigning, and all the activities involved in electing candidates to office. The questions the programs will raise and the discussions which will follow should help to bring an understanding of what "politics" actually is, how it is practiced and what we, as individuals, can do about it.

Far from being an abstract subject, politics, often called "the art of the possible" is an intensely human business. Politics is people, getting together to get things done. The subject of politics can never be fully covered by a factual text-book; since it is concerned with the behavior of people, it is dynamic and constantly changing.

Drama has been chosen as the medium which shows best the motives, the interplay of character and situation, the essential "humanness" of practical political action. By watching these programs the student has an opportunity to come closer to the realities of practical politics and to realize some of the underlying problems of political life.

FORMAT

The four fifteen-minute programs tell the story of a young candidate for the office of state representative. They are chronologically arranged to correspond with the timing of a campaign from June to November. Beginning with the candidate's first contact with politics, each program shows an incident in the campaign which involves a problem to be solved. Each program ends at the point in the story where a decision must be reached--but the decision is not stated. The class then discusses the problem and offers its own solutions.

Dr. Franklin Patterson introduces each program, provides a transition between programs and indicates sections which may be of particular interest. Questions are also listed in this guide which should help to launch classroom discussions.

The programs have purposely been kept short (none more than 16 minutes) so that there will be plenty of time for discussion in the classroom.

HOW TO USE THE PROGRAMS

The problems raised are realistic, actual problems of present-day politics for which we need fresh insights and new solutions. The teacher's aim should be to stimulate the student's thinking, to encourage his search for further information where he may need it, to widen and deepen his understanding, and to help him relate what he has seen on the screen to his own community.

It is important for the teacher to be conscious of what these programs do <u>not</u> attempt to do. They do not attempt to:

1. make political experts of students
2. deal with governmental issues
3. develop a <u>partisan</u> approach to any issue

The discussion should not get sidetracked into issues. Although one of the campaign issues raised in these programs is that of civil rights, any number of other issues might well have been used. The student's attention should be directed to the <u>political</u> problems of getting elected, rather than to any particular issue.

The single most important attitude for the teacher to assume in these discussions is that "the chores that make democracy work" are not something to avoid and, above all, are not a nasty business best left to others. The fact that these chores are everybody's business, a necessity in a self-governing country, and an honorable, though difficult pursuit should be implicit in every discussion.

It is hoped, too, that students may gain from these programs a sense of the interest and excitement of politics as well as a realization of its importance in our democracy.

Program #1 THE RIGHT MAN

Purpose: To show the practical problems involved in deciding to run for office. To raise the question of the politician's public image.

Time: June

Place: Scene 1 - a Little League ballpark
Scene 2 - a living room

Synopsis: Bill Archer, Little League coach, owner of a local automobile agency, the protagonist of the series, has been approached by Sam Frazer, a local business man, about running for the legislature. Frazer introduces him to Fred Hale, the town committee chairman and Ellie Carver, his vice-chairman at a Little League game. They are there at Frazer's invitation for the purpose of looking Archer over. In Archer's living room that night, his brother Paul, partner in the automobile agency, expresses himself vehemently against the idea of Archer running for office. Politics suggests to Paul crime, corruption, graft etc. and he is afraid of the effect on their business. Archer's wife, Susan, is also unenthusiastic (it will interfere with their personal lives, etc.) Archer explains this is a chance to <u>do</u> something. He has promised Fred he will let him know by 9 o'clock. Paul answers the phone and returns with the information that it is their rival agency trying to find out if Archer is running. Paul has told him Archer is not running. "You're <u>not</u>, are you, Bill?" he says to Archer.

Problem: SHOULD BILL ARCHER RUN FOR THE LEGISLATURE?

Questions:

1. Is Paul's cynicism widespread today? When we hear the word "politician", what kind of connotation does it have? Would you feel insulted if someone called you a politician? Why does the word have these connotations? What can be done to correct these false impressions, if they are false?

2. Are the odds against Archer's nomination high simply because he's a novice? What are the chances for the average man going into politics? Shouldn't he at lease be a lawyer? Should he have special talents? In a specialized world, shouldn't he be more of a specialist?

3. In this case, a man is, to a degree, picked by a party to run. How can a man run for office if the party doesn't want him? Does it make sense to run as an independent? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the party system? Why join a party?

4. Do you think that if Archer runs for office, it will hurt his business? In what ways could it hurt him? Is there a possibility that it might help his business? In what ways? Is it true that politics and business don't mix?

Suggestions for Class Projects:

1. Find out from your local election board how many signatures a candidate for the state legislature needs for his nomination papers.

2. Find out the closing date for filing nomination papers in your community.

3. Find out how many state representatives and how many state senators are elected from your district. Who are they?

Program #2 THE PRECINCT

Purpose: To show the practical problems involved in winning a precinct. To raise the question of how to fight entrenched political power.

Time: August

Place: A restaurant interior

Synopsis: Bill Archer has decided to run and is seeking the support of Roy Matson who controls a precinct which is vital to Archer's election. Archer, Fred and Ellie call on Matson at his usual hang-out, a restaurant. They ask for his support but find that Matson has another candidate. During their talk, Matson receives phone calls which show that he, through political favors, has the precinct in his pocket. Archer gets indignant, accusing Matson of being a political boss. Matson fires back that he has turned this precinct from a slum into a decent neighborhood. Archer, Fred and Ellie start to leave the restaurant, talking over what their next move should be. Fred advises that they give up since Archer needs Matson's precinct in order to win. Ellie argues that they can win even if Matson seems to be all-powerful. But Archer is uncertain.

Problem: SHOULD ARCHER GIVE UP IN VIEW OF THIS POWERFUL OPPOSITION OR TRY TO COMBAT IT?

Questions:

1. If Archer decides to stay in the race, what should he do in order to win the precinct away from Matson? Do you think he has any chance of succeeding? How would you do it? What do you think of Ellie's suggestions? What can a new man like Archer tell people at tea parties compared to the hard tangible favors which seniority and experience can offer them on the side?

2. Are Matson's activities illegal? Are they improper? Would our political life be better without men like Matson? Do you think what Matson has to say about making his precinct a better place to live justifies his methods? As campaigns become more and more impersonal, with the TV spot substituting for the handshake, who is going to provide the personal and immediate link with the voters? Would it be good for politics for Archer to try to expose Matson?

3. How does a large turn-out of voters affect the situation? Would it be more advantageous for Archer if the vote is light or heavy? Should Archer's supporters concentrate on a registration drive or would this be a waste of time?

4. Is patronage a necessary part of political organization? What are some of the reasons why we have fewer political bosses than formerly? Do you think it is right for a man in elective office to give jobs or favors to the "faithful?" How can a party put through its program if it does not have its own party members in key posts?

Suggestions for Class Projects:

1. Find out what kind of registration there is in your community.

2. Make a precinct map of your town or city and mark each class member's residence.

3. Invite a precinct leader or town committee chairman to visit a class. Ask him to tell you about his job.

Program #3 THE GIFT

Purpose: To show the practical problems of financing a campaign. To raise the question of where a candidate draws the line on campaign contributions.

Time: September

Place: Scene 1--The patio of a golf club, looking out over the 18th hole.
Scene 2--Archer's home, that night.

Synopsis: Archer's opponent is taking the lead in the campaign because he is able to buy TV time and Archer is not. As they talk after a golf game, Frazer and Walker volunteer to put up $500 apiece for TV spots. They invite Archer to play with them the following week but Fred vetoes it, pointing out that the club is restricted and the fact that Archer is seen there may hurt his campaign.

At Archer's home that night, Susan, Ellie, and Fred are working on campaign business. Archer has just received a call from a man who is urging him to take a stronger stand on civil rights. Fred brushes off the idea. Ellie hands Archer the application for TV time. Susan hands him the checks to endorse saying that he might as well sign since they've overdrawn already. Paul asks Archer what promises he made in return for the money. They argue as to whether or not Archer is obligated to the two men if he accepts their checks. Fred hands Archer a pen. Archer looks at the checks and the TV application wondering whether or not to sign them.

Problem: SHOULD ARCHER ACCEPT THE MONEY?

Questions:

1. Does Archer need to feel obligated to the donors if he should accept this money? Where should he draw the line? When shouldn't a politician accept a gift?

2. How can a campaign today be financed if not from gifts from interested concerns? As politics becomes more and more expensive, is only the rich man able to run? Should government finance campaigns?

3. Have modern communications media, such as TV, fostered or hurt democracy? Should equal time for candidates on TV be extended to all candidates or only to those of the two major parties? Are there other reasons, besides the cost of TV, why campaigns have become more expensive? What were some of the expenses Archer mentioned? Can you think of any more?

4. Do you think that publication of all contributions made to a candidate and a limitation on what he can spend is helpful in solving the financial problems of a campaign? If Archer had to account to the state for all of his funds, would this have any effect on his decision to accept the checks? Would it have any effect on Frazer and Walker who made the contribution?

Suggestions for Class Projects:

1. Look up Section 315 of the Federal Communications Commission regulations and report to the class on what it says.

2. Look up the laws in your state concerning campaign contributions.

3. Invite a party finance committee member to tell how his party raises money and how it is spent.

Program #4 THE FIRST DUTY

Purpose: To show the conflict between personal beliefs and responsibility to one's constituency. To raise the question of which comes first--the election or the issue?

Time: November, a few days before election.

Place: Backstage in an auditorium.

Synopsis: Archer is about to speak at a big rally. Fred objects to a paragraph in his speech which urges more specific Fair Housing Legislation. Fred feels that this would be political suicide since his audience tonight consists largely of property owners. Ellie argues that Archer should wait until after the election. Fred wants to delete the paragraph.

But Archer protests, says he will not be elected by people who don't believe what he believes. Susan supports him. Fred makes a last appeal to him to be sensible and cut the paragraph. Archer looks at Susan, Ellie and Fred in turn and then enters the hall as the cheers come up.

Problem: SHOULD ARCHER CUT THE REFERENCE TO CIVIL RIGHTS IN ORDER TO WIN THE ELECTION?

Questions:

1. Should a politician raise an unpopular issue during a campaign, or concentrate on getting elected so he can act on it?

2. If Archer is elected, should he act merely as a representative of those who elected him, or should he act on his own beliefs, even if they disagree with the beliefs of his constituents? Should he guide public opinion or merely reflect it? Is there any difference between good politics and good government?

3. Is compromise a sign of weakness or of strength? Does a compromise mean giving in or is it a necessary part of politics or of any kind of negotiation? Can you compromise with principles?

4. What is the value of public opinion polls? Are they useful to politicians? In what way can a candidate use public opinion polls in his campaign? If a public opinion poll showed a candidate that 75% of the voters of a district were against a measure that he believed in, would he be justified in sidestepping it?

Suggestions for Class Projects:

1. Read one or two daily newspapers for a week and report on a list of controversial issues which a local candidate might wish to avoid or to bring out in his campaign.

2. Find out what bills are before the House or the Senate at present (if Congress is in session), and determine how each member of the class would wish his Congressman to vote.

SUGGESTED READING

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